One Epic φ of Stardusts

Y∞n Irene Hong

Follow this and additional works at: http://openscholarship.wustl.edu/bfa

Recommended Citation
Hong, Y∞n Irene, "One Epic φ of Stardusts" (2017). Bachelor of Fine Arts Senior Papers. 35.
http://openscholarship.wustl.edu/bfa/35

This Unrestricted is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Art at Washington University Open Scholarship. It has been accepted for inclusion in Bachelor of Fine Arts Senior Papers by an authorized administrator of Washington University Open Scholarship. For more information, please contact digital@wumail.wustl.edu.
One Epic φf Stardusts

Yoon Hong

B.F.A. Major in Studio Art
Washington University in St. Louis
Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts

5 - 5 - 2017
Abstract

_A long time ago in a far away galaxy,_
there was a star shining alone in the deep darkness.
The beautiful star aged and exploded into a supernova,
where her golden light scattered into the tiniest sparkles of dust,
pouring down to Earth.

_Made of Stardust,_
humans naturally have responded to the divine light that they carry inside their souls,
through diverse acts of enlightenment such as art, religion, and science.

_Art is my way of divination through which I realize my color light as a prototype_
_and communicate with the rest of Universe beyond what’s visible._
_I am the Creator and the Facilitator of my _Y∞niverse_ which _presently exist_
_As a Stardust, an artist, a Korean, and a woman,_
_I keep walking in between opposing forces and varying perspectives_
_until I transcend their boundaries and reveal their glittery metaphysical bonds._
There was a question that flipped my perception of ‘value’. When I was a kid learning addition, and my father jumped in and asked, “Would it still be two if you add one water drop to one water drop?” I was baffled. Not only in water, but also in energy and matter, such as, light and soil, one plus one could visibly equal one. But adding oil adds another story, for oil and water would not mix but attract by their unlike charges. Are there multiple answers in math? How do we define values? Are we bound by a single absolute system?

Values are relative to perspectives, or the level of consciousness; this may relate to a Friedrich Nietzsche’s Perspectivism which holds that knowledge is always perspectival; “We need to be flexible, not trapped by one set of values or the illusion of value-free knowing, but able to move from one valuational perspective to another, and from these many points of view, assemble our picture of the world.”

It is essential and enlightening to be aware of different viewpoints not just to draw a bigger picture of humanity, but also to realize the interconnections between apparent contradictions. Among endlessly diverse perspectives, let’s focus on the complementary forces.

Think of atoms, for instance, as we and the world are made of atoms. The world is full of opposing energies that counterbalance with one another through rhythmic push and pull. Three elementary particles - protons (+), neutrons (0), and electrons (-) make each atom with the same numbers of protons and electrons which neutralize its charge. But what holds the atom together is the attraction between unlike charges.

I am not to devalue individualisms through neutralizations. I pursue the unification of antagonism for the development of communal values that can speak to all beings, from ancient to now, from visible to invisible, from matter to soul... and more.

Unity of duality. Harmony In the 3rd century B.C. of Ancient Greece, philosophers, such as, Aristotle and Socrates had described the desirable middle between two extremes, one of excess and the other of deficiency, as the Golden Mean, or Golden Middle Way, or Goldilocks Theory. Mathematicians, especially Euclid in his *The Elements*, used the term Division in Extreme and Mean Ratio” (DEMR) when the ratio of two quantities is same as the ratio of their sum = 1.618, denoted as $\phi$ or Phi.

---

1 Michael Lacewing, *Nietzsche’s perspectivism*, (Routledge Taylor & Francis Group)
2 Michael Lacewing
4 Carl Sagan, 183
6 A. P. Stakhov and Scott Anthony Olsen
Artists and architects have been applying the proportion in the course of phenomenal creations. Greek sculptor Phidias’ Parthenon and the Olympian Temple of Zeus (about 430 B.C.), Great Pyramid of Giza (2560 B.C.), Leonardo da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man (1490), The Last Supper (1498) and Mona Lisa (1517). Georges Seurat, Salvador Dali, and Piet Mondrian are known to actively employ the Divine ratio in their paintings.10

Le Corbusier, Swiss-French modern architect, advocated the formula along with his search for harmony and balance in his architectural works.11 Rafael Araujo, the 21st century Venezuelan artist and architect produces technology-free renderings of logarithmic spirals swirl into existence as motions of butterflies and formations of shells in his “Calculation”.

8 A. P. Stakhov and Scott Anthony Olsen, 5
9 R. A. Dunlap
10 Silka P., Most Memorable Golden Ratio Examples in Modern Art
11 Silka P.
Candidly speaking, as an artist, I never know what I am doing until the end of each creating process in which everything begins to converge and make sense, as if I were painting hundred different pieces of one set of puzzles. Following my intuition through art not only releases my soul, but also leads to essential discoveries, such as, what I do, why I do, and who I am.

Unconsciously I have been responding to spirals in nature that attracted me by its willful, aesthetic patterns. From my fingerprint, shells, and snails to hurricanes and galaxies, helix appeared to my curious eyes. Through creating sculptures, paintings, installations and films, I have been sharing my observations.

Yoon Hong, *Nature in Humanity* (2014), enamel paints and gold leaves

Yoon Hong, *Rom@nesco Broccoli Study* (2014), acrylic, beads, pink foam

Yoon Hong, *My Little Fish Tank* (2016), installation view

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=6&v=gwKK8L2HChg
“The Oriental mind created an image and science of the world in which all antagonistic forces were indissolubly intertwined within an ultimately unitary form”

Chinese philosophy is more than fifty-centuries old, begins with Yin-Yang (陰陽) which constitute all the phenomena in relation to its complementary energy. Yin-Yang is the activity where unity meets in between duality in constant motion of interacting. Yin: ‘shady side’ and yang: ‘sunny side”, representing polarities, such as, female-male, below-above, cold-warm, in-out, soft-hard, field-mountain, and more.

As a 21st century Orient, I take my ontological position of Dialectical monism that holds reality is ultimately a unified whole of duality. The essential unity is that of complementary polarities which, while opposed in the realm of experience and perception, are co-substantial in a transcendent sense. I believe in "Universal Dialectic"- the infinite, essential, and fundamental principle of evolutionary and/or progressive creation/change which actualizes all potential states of being through the self-organizing integrations of complementary polarities. The process of Becoming or existence.

---

13 George Ohsawa, Unique Principle, (George Ohsawa, Macrobiotic Foundation, 1973)
14 George Ohsawa
16 Nahum Stiskin
17 Naturyl, *Dialectical Monism*
“In the beginning there was no distinction between sky and earth, and all was chaos. The sky and earth were separated, and under the arching sky, mountains erupted and water appeared. In the sky, stars appeared when it was dark, and Okhwang-sangje (the god who controls the universe) sent the sun and moon as timepieces, to bring order to time.”

(Don Baker, Korean Spirituality)

As the creator of my universe, I separate the void space into multiple planes with pure water, rich oil, and stardusts. The liquids and particles pour from my hands like waterfalls, and their fusion creates beautiful and chaotic waterscapes in constant motions. This is the first natural phenomena of Y∞niverse, resembling macro star formations and micro cell membranes.

Remember my waterdrop anecdote? What happens when you add oil to water?

Water and oil together create a in-between layer, as their density and polarity differ and create tension. I then broaden the horizon by inserting glitters, some of which concrete into jelly-like terrain as they sink. I am water-drawing and oil-drawing landscapes underwater. While to draw means to make marks in artistic sense, its definitions include to move or develop something, to be the cause of, to experience force, to displace or separate, to attract, and more.18

As gods and goddesses are depicted bright and dark, kind and evil in eastern and western myths, second I appear in darkness and perform uncomfortable and sensual gestures that distract the emergence of Y∞niverse. Film as the ultimate media allows further manipulations of time, space, and perspectives to depict myself and my domain bigger.

“The painter has the Universe in his mind and hands.” – Leonardo da Vinci

18 Wiktionary contributors, Draw.
二．
“We The Stardust”
Children of Stars

“I have... a terrible need... shall I say the word... of religion. Then I go out at night and paint the stars.”

– Vincent van Gogh

When was the last time you saw a number of stars? In 2003, I was lucky enough to witness the luminous night of Kenya for over a month. Lost in stars, I was no more able to recognize the Orion constellation by its bright Belt or the Big Dipper constellation by Polaris which I could still pinpoint at the dim night of Seoul back then. I was only nine, but I was able to draw the sky of thousands years ago inside me vibrantly. Stories that stars have been the guidance of our ancestors began to make sense.

The sky Gogh used to see must have been brighter. When I first saw his Starry Night (1889) in a book, the golden stars and the moon in halos, and the blue swirling clouds struck me, as though the light he had witnessed was still contained alive. He inspired me to capture in flat images the fluid motions of vibrating energy in all things.

I paint my sky of Yooniverse inside my microcosm of glass containers like an alchemist experimenting for new discoveries of patterns.

I call this series of images and a film, We The Stardust, for I see the glitters as ourselves falling from the sky, scattering and merging together at different levels of physical and chemical reactions.

Yoon Hong, We The Stardust (series), 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3lptA922pl
Ⅲ.
“Cahokian”
From Sky to Earth

At some point in the future, our great era of twenty-first century may seem primitive. Our present, which already contains so much history that is not even fully puzzled, may be something of apathy. Who knows after all whether we will be remembered or be buried completely?

Like most people in modern days, I had no idea what Cahokia was, especially why it existed and how it exists still, almost as if it doesn’t. It was Patricio Gusmán’s Nostalgia For the Light (2011) that enabled me to see the lands and trees like I could see the sky beyond what’s seen in my limited eyes. Gusmán parallels women and astronomers of Chill who both devote their lives to discovering pieces and remnants of the past and human history; while the women excavate bones of their beloved ones in land, the astronomers examine the sky to track our oldest stars and galaxies.

“[voiceover] I am convinced that memory has a gravitational force. It is constantly attracting us.
Those who have a memory are able to live in the fragile present moment.
Those who have none don’t live anywhere.”
- Gaspar Galaz from Nostalgia For the Light (2011)

By the need to be in touch with the land that I climbed up to Cahokia, which was a vortex of native social, political, economic, and religious activity.¹⁹ Cahokia before A.D. 1050 was not yet Mississippian. It was dawn and blue on my entrance, but through my interaction with the greenland, the sky awakes and turns pink.

“If there was single overriding theme in the cosmology of the southeastern Indian groups, it was the organization of the natural and supernatural worlds into dualistic categories expressed as sets of oppositions, such as the opposition of the Upper and Lower World.”²⁰

---

¹⁹ Timothy R. Pauketat, Cahokia: domination and ideology in the Mississippian world, (Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press, 2000)
²⁰ Timothy R. Pauketat and Thomas E. Emerson, p196
“It was a cosmology that also revolved about a set of dualisms—of oppositions. Their world revolved about the Upper and Lower Worlds as reflected, for example, in their stone fertility figurines and the elaborate cosmological iconography of their art.”

“The figurine contains a female in a short skirt holding a plant talk, with corn cobs and basket; The triadic structure of the mound embodies the symbolic system that includes the Upper and Lower Worlds and the world of people.”

Not only to Cahokian dualistic-monistic cosmology, but I relate myself to Cahokian Redgoddess who wore short skirts, accessories of shells, and cosmic container of sacred bundles. I in fact use my shell-phone as a device to flip the relation between the spectacle and spectator. In filming "Cahokian" (2016), I drew spirals and my korean names with a branch stick to record my own important symbols on the hisotorical landmark. Cahokians crafted stone fertility figurines, Ramey-Incised vessels, burials, crystals, and other exotica, one of which popularly used symbol was spiral; it originated in the principle of Oneness.

(a Cahokian vessel AD 1050 - 1275)

---

21 Timothy R. Pauketat, 228
22 Timothy R. Pauketat
23 Timothy R. Pauketat, 213
Some may relate me to being “plastic medicine people”\(^24\), a term used to accuse of 'New Age'\(^25\) neo-shamans' who are “wannabe Indians” and “wannabe shamans”. Medicine men and women in Native Indian traditions were healers who gathered in their Medicine bundles sacred and powerful stones, herbs, and other object-persons to serve in ceremonies.\(^26\) I do not stand up for Indians because I am not one.

As an Artist, as a Korean, and as a Woman, I claim to walk a shamanic path for my journey of self-realizations and healing process of souls, with love and care for other beings of the old-new, upper-lower, micro-macro, and bright and dark Universe.

四．

" ~ | ~ ”

Dancing Women

“Life beats down and crushes the soul and art reminds you that you have one” - Stella Adler

Almost like an instinct of human souls, Shamanism had emerged in numerous cultures since the earliest human histories, as ways to connect to other realms of nature and cure illness. It still breathes in a variety of forms and practices. My focus is on that of Korea, where Shamanism has been specially women phenomena.

“Healing, birthing children, gathering and growing food, keeping communities in balance, presiding over ceremonies and rites passage, maintaining relations with the dead, teaching, ministering to those in need, communing with nature to learn her secrets, preserving the wisdom traditions, divining the future, and dancing with gods and goddesses—these are shamanic arts. And these are the arts of women.”

- Barbar Tedlock, Woman in the Shaman's Body

Korean Shamans are mostly Mu-dang, of which Chinese letter 巫(mu) represents a dancing person in between the sky and the earth with the middle path that links them.\(^27\) Although Korean shamanism has become an essential part in the social construction of the Korean nation\(^28\) its position in the modern era is as misfortunate as its development. Women have always been treated lower than men, excluded from major social events and education. Shamanism, never supported by the elite class, became women phenomena where they release oppressions and heal themselves through dancing. Korean myths also carry female heroism that glorified their beauty and dignity to instill courage and hope in women in the society of inequality.\(^29\) Art was the way through which women could free and cure their souls from all the malefactors of the unequal society.

(Mu-dang, Kim Geum Hwa )

\(^{25}\) G.A. Gaskell, New Age
\(^{26}\) Graham Harvey and Wallis Robert J., The a to Z of Shamanism, (Scarecrow Press, 2010)
\(^{27}\) Kim Tae-kon
\(^{28}\) Seo Jinseok, The Role of Shamanism in Korean Society in its Inter- and Intra-cultural Contacts, (University of Tartu Press, 2013)
\(^{29}\) Oh Kyong-geun, Korean Shamanism - The Religion of Women, (International Journal of Korean Humanities and Social Sciences)
In "~ | ~" (2017), I go to the shore of Mississippi River to interact with the natural world. Instead of sand or stones, the brown bricks of St. Louis led me to grey water. In between bricks, river and land, opposite poles of a boat, I struggle to balance myself. But after acquiring moments of neutrality on the boat, I turn my attention to the camera, the audience, and create tension through gaze.

五。
“Blue Magic”
Healers

“You must have chaos within you to give birth to a dancing star.”
– Friedrich Nietzsche

“In Nguni a woman is called umfazi. Ukufaza is to scatter. Women are the scatterers of the living seed. Just as the stars pour unto lights, some break into little pieces to create an even richer Milky Way.”
– Credo Mutwa

Women are often compared to flowers. A little beautiful vulnerable flower that has no will but scents and honey that attract even other great species, such as, bees and humans. “I’m glad it’s a girl. And I hope she’ll be a fool - that’s the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool.” (Daisy, Great Gatsby)

As Daisy says, why not choose to be a flower that is fertile, attractive, and passive to the changing environments and intruders. But I think women should aim for queen bees. A queen bee is not a monarch as bees are democratic creatures that vote. Among female and male bees, a queen bee is a single, core of the entire colony’s population.

Women give births. Women carry extra light of souls inside our bodies. So women are always waving, naturally with the ever fluctuating flow of nature. Our bodies respond to the lunar cycle with blood that is for purification and reproduction, not for destruction or discomfort.

30 Bongani Madondo, From Shaman to Star man: Bongani Madondo Has an Audience with Sanusi Credo Mutwa
While filming *Blue Magic* (2017), I saw a dead squirrel blow a big tree. I naturally acted as the healing woman, nourishing and burying the corpse with leaves, flowers, and stones I had earlier gathered from trees and soils. By treating the birth of flowers and the death of an animal with equal amount of tangibility and closeness, I depict beauty and repulse of nature neutrally as a dual-unity. To even further suggest that death is not the end, but may be another beginning, I partially time-reverse the chronology.
Now I finally present myself as a box of a present.

"Present" is a series of ongoing happening performance that operates within the participation of audience through gaze. I objectify myself by caging my body inside the transparent box, which is a physical boundary that activates optical communications.

Rooted from Dadaists, Surrealists, and Futurists performances, the term happening was coined by Allen Kaprow to suggest 'something spontaneous, something that just happens to happen'. Kaprow said, 'The line between art and life should be kept as fluid, and perhaps as indistinct as possible'. Fluxus artists such as John Cage and Joseph Beuys accompanied.

Eyes are where souls spark. Without touching, smelling, hearing, and tasting, we can learn and feel by seeing. When the eyes of two individuals meet-eye-contact-, where magical chemical reactions occur. Japan’s National Institute for Physiological Sciences found that in people gazing into each other’s eyes both subjects showed enhanced neural synchronization with one another in a region on the side of the right frontal lobe, the right inferior frontal gyrus, which is associated with social communication and empathy.

---

32 Robert Lavine, *The Hormones and Brain Regions Behind Eye Contact*
But I do not necessarily gaze at the audience to stimulate good hormones. Rather, I subvert the conventional power dynamics. From a spectacle, I become a spectator. From a performer, I become an audience. From a flower, I become a queen bee. From art, I become the reality where I have the power.

“Anybody can look at a pretty girl and see a pretty girl. An artist can look at a pretty girl and see the old woman she will become. A better artist can look at an old woman and see the pretty girl that she used to be.

But a great artist—a master—and that is what Auguste Rodin was—can look at an old woman, portray her exactly as she is...and force the viewer to see the pretty girl she used to be...and more than that, he can make anyone with the sensitivity of an armadillo, or even you, see that this lovely young girl is still alive, not old and ugly at all,
but simply prisoner inside her ruined body. He can make you feel the quiet, endless tragedy that there was never a girl born who ever grew older than eighteen in her heart...no matter what the merciless hours have done to her. Look at her, Ben. Growing old doesn’t matter to you and me; we were never meant to be admired—but it does to them.”
— Robert A. Heinlein

“Those eyes... were not those of Irene that I would always know as so sweet”, some professors would say after interacting with me through the performances.

Could my eyes carry the sparks of souls of other beings? those who never get to shine their lights because of the dominance of darkness.
Outro

* Shine Like Stars *

“Little Alice fell
D
O
W
the hOle,
bumped her head
and bruised her soul”

– Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland

The world is figuratively and literally dark. This entire space is made up of 95 percentage of dark matter. When our souls feel bound, it is easy to feel like we are falling into the hole of darkness as if the gravity is no more resistible, as if we are on the way to a black hole.

Yet, a long ago, in that darkness, our stars were born, and their explosions- supanova - gave birth to atoms that make up most of our recent bodies. Even after their decays, their lights reach our eyes and twinkle like little stars of map to guide us. What consistently affects and stimulates me in the most tangible and soulful sense is Nature; it is the first artist of creation, and humans are its masterpiece.

Art is my act of enlightenment, divination, through which I realize my being as a prototype of the entire universe and then connect my microscopic universe to the rest of mega Cosmos.

Art is my way to picture my world within this universe - my perspective of living. Science is one another perspective. Religion is another one. All the folk stories, myths, religions, philosophies, scientific facts and even our dreams may be millennium puzzles that draw divine Cosmos. No matter how big and great the entire set is, each piece matters equally to complete the whole. Each individual piece carries each portion of the divinity. The light as powerful and magnificent as that of stars resides inside our precious individual souls. Shine like stars until you flow one with our spiral galaxy.

Perhaps, more than real is art that it makes dreams come true.
Art is physically actualizing what I think, feel, imagine and dream personally inside my microscopic body to people within macro Universe. I can prove existentially, as the realistic representation that through art, I be what I be: A Goddess, a Shaman, a queen bee, girl, the creator of an entire universe, and even art itself.

*  

33 Carl Sagan
34 Carl Sagan
Reference

   https://mg.co.za/article/2016-07-29-00-from-shaman-to-star-man-bongani-madondo-has-an-audience-with-sanusi-credo-mutwa


